

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 IO-13 ADP-00 PM-07 L-03 CIAE-00 DODE-00

INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-03 RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01 RSR-01

/098 W

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R 031027Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8402

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMEMBASSY CONAKRY

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

AMEMBASSY LUANDA

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY MASERU

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION USUN NY

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, WA, SF

SUBJ: NAMIBIA: MASSIVE ELECTION BOYCOTT IN OWAMBO

REF: PRETORIA 2695

1. WHEN POLLING STATIONS IN OWAMBO CLOSED AUGUST 2, ONLY

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SOME 3 PERCENT OF REGISTERED VOTERS HAD CAST BALLOTS.

DESPITE OFFICIAL EFFORTS TO EXPLAIN IT AWAY, MASSIVE
BOYCOTT INFLICTED COSTLY POLITICAL DEFEAT ON SAG, AND
RAISED SERIOUS QUESTIONS ABOUT FUTURE POLITICAL STABILITY
OF NAMIBIA.

2. "SHOWPIECE" ELECTION, WHICH SAG HAD HOPED WOULD DEMONSTRATE
POPULAR SUPPORT FOR SEPARATE DEVELOPMENT, HAS ENDED IN DISMAL
FAILURE FOR GOVERNMENT. OUT OF 42,000 REGISTERED VOTERS, ONLY
ABOUT 1,300 BALLOTS WERE CAST IN HOMELAND AND CITIES IN
OTHER PARTS OF NAMIBIA (DEFINITIVE FIGURES NOT YET AVAILABLE).
THERE WERE NO INCIDENTS, AS OVAMBOS AGAIN DEMONSTRATED
THE REMARKABLE COHESION AND DISCIPLINE THAT MARKED THE 1971
MIGRANT WORKERS STRIKE.

3. BOYCOTT STRENGTHENS MORAL POSITION OF BLACK MULTI-PARTY
NATIONAL CONVENTION, AND ESPECIALLY SOUTH WEST AFRICA PEOPLES'
ORGANIZATION (SWAPO) AND JOHANNES NANGUTUUALA'S DEMOCRATIC
COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT PARTY (DEMKOP) -- BOTH OVAMBO-BASED --
WHICH DECLINED TO PARTICIPATE IN CAMPAIGN AND URGED VOTERS TO
STAY HOME. COMMENTING ON ELECTION RESULTS, SWAPO NATIONAL
SECRETARY DAVID MERORO SAID IN WINDHOEK THAT SAG'S PRESENT
TROUBLES WERE OF ITS OWN MAKING. BY ITS FAILURE TO HONOR
PROMISE OF FREE POLITICAL ACTIVITY IN TERRITORY, WHICH IT MADE
TO UN SECRETARY GENERAL WALDHEIM, SAG HAD FORFEITED CONFIDENCE
OF INHABITANTS. HE SAID RESULTS CONFIRMED THAT OVAMBOS WANT
NOTHING TO DO WITH SOUTH AFRICA.

4. CHIEF FILEMON ELIFAS' HOMELAND GOVERNMENT AND HIS OWAMBO
INDEPENDENCE PARTY, ON OTHER HAND, ARE EXPOSED AS SAG STOOGES
WITHOUT SIGNIFICANT POPULAR SUPPORT. ALTHOUGH ASSURED OF
OVERWHELMING MAJORITY IN OWAMBO LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY BEFORE
THE ELECTION, ELIFAS WILL PROBABLY HAVE TO RELY MORE AND
MORE ON EMERGENCY POLICE POWERS TO ASSURE ORDER AND RETAIN
POWER. UNFORTUNATELY FOR HIM AND FOR SAG, THIS COULD LEAD TO
VICIOUS CYCLE OF ESCALATING POLITICAL TENSIONS.

5. SPEAKING FOR SAG, COMMISSIONER GENERAL JANNIE DE WET
ADMITTED HE WAS "VERY DISAPPOINTED" BY ELECTION RESULTS
BUT DENIED THAT BOYCOTT MEANT OVAMBOS REJECTED SEPARATE
DEVELOPMENT. OBVIOUSLY GRASPING AT STRAWS TO MINIMIZE POLITICAL
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DAMAGE, HE CLAIMED THAT FACT THERE HAD BEEN NO INCIDENTS
PROVED THAT "SILENT MAJORITY" OF OVAMBOS ACCEPTED GOVERNMENT
POLICY. OTHER REASONS FOR ELECTION FIASCO, ACCORDING DE WET,
WERE "FOREIGNNESS" OF DEMOCRATIC ELECTORAL PROCEDURES TO
PEOPLE ACCUSTOMED TO APPOINTED CHIEFS, ABSENCE OF GRASS-ROOTS
ORGANIZATIONS ABLE TO MOTIVATE PEOPLE TO VOTE, AND LACK OF
TRANSPORT AND LONG DISTANCES TO POLLING STATIONS. HE THOUGHT
POLL WOULD HAVE BEEN "MUCH HIGHER" IF SPREAD OVER FIVE DAYS

INSTEAD OF TWO. DIE TRANSVALER, SEMI-OFFICIAL SPOKESMAN FOR
TRANSCAAL NATIONAL PARTY, HAS ALSO HINTED DARKLY -- AND
UNSPECIFICALLY -- OF ROLE OF LEFT-WING PROPAGANDA AND
INTIMIDATION.

6. FLIMSY EXCUSES CANNOT HIDE FACT THAT SAG IS FAR OUT OF
TOUCH WITH TRUE SENTIMENTS OF OVAMBOS, WHO MAKE UP NEARLY
HALF TOTAL POPULATION OF NAMIBIA, AS WELL AS WITH OTHER
NON-WHITES OF TERRITORY. IF SAG PROCEEDS TO FORCE APARTHEID
INSTITUTIONS ON INHABITANTS IN FACE OF THIS CLEAR WARNING, IT
IS INVITING TROUBLE WITH INCREASINGLY EFFECTIVE BLACK
POLITICAL OPPONENTS.
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